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ABSTRACT

The Mississippi Teacher Assessment Instruments (MTAI) are key elements in a process for both ensuring teacher competency and accrediting teacher education programs. Institutions providing teacher education must pass both a process review and a performance review. To pass the process review, institutions must screen students according to set standards, must obtain accreditation from specified professional groups, must require students to complete certain minimum levels of training including student teaching, and must make sure that all those supervising student teachers are properly certified as teacher evaluators. The performance review is a test of the quality of the institution's graduates, a significant percentage of whom must achieve acceptable scores on designated tests upon completion of their educations and must advance from provisional to standard certification after one year. The MTAI are used to measure the teaching skills of beginning teachers and to assess the skills attained by teachers seeking standard certification, and thus perform a significant role in the accreditation process. This report includes an appendix listing the 16 competency areas measured with the MTAI. (PGD)

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An Analysis of the Mississippi Performance-Based School Accreditation (Pilot Study)

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Introduction

Educational reform became reality in 1982 with the passage of the Mississippi Education Reform Act. While Mississippi was a leading state in reform, there have been numerous national level reports and task forces dealing with reform in teacher training and certification. Also, the State of Mississippi has taken bold steps in reforming school district accreditation based upon performance-based standards as well as provisional certification of teachers.

MTAI and Teacher Education Program Approval

The Mississippi Teacher Assessment Instruments (MTAI) play a key role for the approval of teacher education programs at Mississippi colleges and universities. During the developmental stages, the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification, and Development gave considerable thought to two vital elements of teacher preparation - (1) what professional knowledge is essential for beginning teachers, and (2) what teaching skills and abilities are most effective. The Commission established effective July 1, 1986, a teacher education/certification process based upon four components:

1. Entry into a Teacher Education program,
2. Entry into Provisional Certification,
3. Entry into Standard Certification,
4. Continuing certification.

The MTAI will be found in several phases of the process - teacher education program approval, provisional certification, and entry into standard certification. It is also used as one of the measuring tools for the purpose of state accreditation. The MTAI is designed to measure the teaching skills of beginning teachers. To complete the provisional certification period and acquire a standard certificate, the beginning teacher must demonstrate mastery at a prescribed level of effectiveness

for 16 professional competencies (see Appendix A). As this is mandatory for all beginning teachers beginning with the spring 1988 graduates, these competencies have been directly linked with the program approval process.

Program Approval

A process evaluation and a performance evaluation is employed to determine the approval status of programs at teacher education institutions. The process evaluation involves a review of the institution's requirements for student entry into the program. The performance evaluation involves a review of the success of the institutions graduates in meeting certification requirements. The process evaluation began this fall (1986) and the performance evaluation will begin with the spring 1988 graduates. Therefore, students entering teacher education programs in the fall of 1986 will adhere to the Process Review Standards.

Standards for Process Review

Standard 1: Prior to being admitted to a teacher education program, students shall have completed a minimum of 44 semester hours of the core curriculum.

Standard 2: Prior to being admitted to a teacher education program, students shall have achieved a minimum grade point of 2.50 on a 4.0 system.

Standard 3: Prior to being admitted to a teacher education program, students shall attain a minimum score set by the Commission on an instrument approved by the Commission.

Standard 4: Prior to completing a teacher education program, all elementary, special area, and secondary education teacher candidates shall have successfully completed a teacher education program which is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) using the Redesign Standards or a teacher education program approved by the State Board of Education which meets the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) criteria for the specific programs to be addressed.

All the Mississippi program approval standards shall be

applied to the programs approval process; the schedule for the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) reviews shall be accepted, and for non-NCATE accredited programs, there shall be a schedule for reviews established by the commission.

Standard 5: Prior to completing a teacher education program, students shall have successfully completed a 12 week, full day student teaching experience.

Standard 6:** Prior to completing a teacher education program, students shall have participated in a student teaching experience with a college or university supervisor and a cooperating teacher who are certified as provisional teacher evaluators.

Standard 7: The institution of higher education shall have requested all students to have an official copy of their NTE scores forwarded to the Office of Teacher Certification.

Special attention should be noted to Standard 6. Both the university supervisor of a student teacher and the local cooperating teacher must be certified on the MTAI as provisional teacher evaluators. This ensures that the student teacher will be placed with a properly trained career teacher at the local level and that the university supervisor is aware of the MTAI requirements.

Standards for Performance Evaluation Review

All institutions of higher education shall receive a performance review beginning with the graduates of the spring of 1988. The performance review shall be conducted annually.

Standards for Performance Review

Standard 8: A significantly high percentage of graduates of the teacher education program will score at or above the proficiency level on the core battery of the NTE and specialty area test. The numerical value of a "significantly high percentage" will be established by the Commission by September 1, 1987.

Standard 9:** A significantly high percentage of graduates of the teacher education program who receive provisional certification will be granted standard certification after the first provisional year. The numerical value of "a significantly high percentage" will be established by the Commission by September 1, 1987.

The MTAI plays a critical role in the performance review component of program approval. As Standard 9 reads, "a significantly high percentage of the graduates of the teacher education program who receive provisional certification will be granted standard certification after the first provisional year." At this time, the numerical value of significantly high percentage has not been determined by the Commission. It should be noted that a beginning teacher is given three years to clear the provisional status.

As a result of either the process review or the performance evaluation review, the Commission will recommend to the State Board of Education the following actions:

1. Approved - Program which is in compliance with all nine standards for teacher education.

2. Approved with Reservation--Program which has not effectively demonstrated that all nine standards for teacher education have been met. A program receiving approved with reservation status will correct the deficiencies noted within a maximum of three years. The Commission will facilitate the development and implementation of the plan and will offer assistance through the State Department of Education during the approved with reservation period. This plan will be reviewed and approved by the Commission. The program will file an annual report to the Commission on the success of the remediation plan, and a visiting team will annually monitor the progress of the plan. If the program has not corrected deficiencies after the second year of the three year period, the institution must inform all students making application to the teacher education program of its status.

3. Non-Approved - Teacher education program not in compliance with all nine program approval standards after the remediation period. Graduates of programs with nonapproved status will be eligible to receive certification in Mississippi only through the alternate route of scoring at least the 51st percentile on the NTE.

Institutional Responsibility

The certification status of all graduates of a teacher education institution shall be based on compliance with all standards on a program-by-program basis within that teacher education institution. When the

number of students affected by an approved with reservation status reaches one-third or more of the education majors, the entire school or department of education shall be placed on approved with reservation status. The responsibility for the quality of each teacher education program within the institution of higher education rests ultimately with that institution.

Summary

The MTAI is a key component of the Mississippi Teacher Education Program Approval Process as mandated by the State Board of Education. Its impact on the schools of education has resulted in key curriculum changes and growth of the students teaching experience as a major component of teacher education. As school year 1988-89 approaches, the MTAI evaluation of provisional teachers will have a dual responsibility--that of the teacher acquiring standard certification and holding teacher education programs accountable for their graduates.

Educational Significance

Since this past year involved the pilot study, further study and research are needed to account for any significant differences which may develop between past accreditation, teacher certification, and approval of teacher education programs in Mississippi and the new performance-based accreditation model. Modification in the new performance-based model has already been completed and trained personnel have been certified by the State Department of Education to implement the Mississippi Based School Accreditation Model in the upcoming years as well as provisional certification of teachers and teacher education programs at Mississippi colleges and universities.

APPENDIX A

MTAI TEACHING COMPETENCIES

1. Plans instruction to achieve selected objectives.
2. Organizes instruction to take into account individual differences among learners.
3. Obtains and uses information about the needs and progress of individual learners.
4. Obtains and uses information about the effectiveness of instruction to revise it when necessary.
5. Uses instructional techniques, methods, and media related to the objectives.
6. Communicates with learners.
7. Demonstrates a repertoire of teaching methods.
8. Reinforces and encourages learner involvement in instruction.
9. Demonstrates an understanding of the school subject being taught and demonstrates its relevance.
10. Organizes time, space, materials, and equipment of instruction.
11. Demonstrates enthusiasm for teaching and learning and the subject being taught.
12. Help learners develop positive self-concepts.
13. Manages classroom interactions.
14. Meets professional responsibilities.
15. Engages in professional self-development.
16. Communicates high expectations for learners.